

THIS PAGE The Viuffs' home evokes that sunny, carefree feeling of being on holiday. Here, Charlotte relaxes in the sitting room. The hanging chandelier, imported for the Viuffs by Weylandts (086-010-3400), creates a spectacular focal point in the double-volume space. **OPPOSITE** The dining room, bathed in sunlight, speaks of comfort and ease. The wall-mounted masks are from Pikka Pakka (021-XXX-XXXX), and the tub chairs are from Weylandts. Charlotte sourced the fabric for the curtains from a bargain shop in Somerset West.



NATURE'S COURSE

Filled with a tangible sense of life and laughter, this family home on a country golf estate is warm and inviting

Text Kim Chaloner Production Laureen Rossouw Photographs Jac de Villiers





LEFT The essence of this home is nature. 'In this area you have to take the wind into account', says Mads of the enclosed courtyard and outdoor area around which the home has been designed. The walkway over the pool leads visitors to the entrance. **THIS PICTURE** The house was laid out in such a way that the sitting room enjoys the best view. The shaggy-pile rug was imported from China, the modular coffee table and sofa are from Elle Interiors (021-XXX-XXX), and the Viuffs sourced the vases from Kenly Flower Wholesalers (021-461-9140). The candle holders were a holiday buy in Bali.

It's the overwhelming sense of stillness and space you first notice when stepping inside the home of Danish couple Mads and Charlotte Viuff.

Then, as you take in the easy integration of the home into its site, you realise there are clear sightlines from every room, every nook and every angle, across the quiet, rippling waters of the Kleinmond lagoon, which laps gently at the edge of the plot's indigenous garden. 'We're so in touch with the stars out here,' says Charlotte, with her relaxed manner and engaging smile. 'We always know when it's full moon.' Mads also loves that his young family gets to experience nature's closeness every day. 'The first thing we do when we wake in the mornings is pull open the curtains and check out the birds,' he says. 'We've nicknamed the daily "summit" of pelicans and flamingos the G8!'

Together with their three daughters – Rebecca (9), Savanna (7) and Thérèse (5) – the Viuffs live an idyllic life, which is precisely what they were looking for when they moved to South Africa from Copenhagen 13 years ago. 'We realised that South Africa was full of opportunities and had a great climate,' says Charlotte. They spent eight years in Fresnaye, where they 'had to get into the car to go anywhere' and moved to the secure Arabella Country Estate in Kleinmond five years ago. Here, the children spend their days running in the clean country air, experiencing a childhood much like their parents' in Denmark. One of the family's favourite activities is hiking in the Harold Porter botanical gardens in nearby Betty's Bay, a chance for the girls, and their ever-present Rhodesian Ridgeback pup Riva, to discover some of nature's infinite secrets.

The couple (who own Maxabella, the estate's official developers) concede that a large part of conceptualising the home's layout was about 'sidestepping the elements' – the Overberg's strong winds and blazing sun. They were adamant their home should have underfloor heating and a north-facing pool in a central courtyard. They also wanted lots of glass, a double-volume living space with a pitched roof and an open-plan kitchen. The result is an industrial-style structure that doesn't appear to be supported by any walls – instead by the breathtaking interplay between steel columns, lime-washed wooden buttresses and plenty of glass. Situated as it is on a gentle incline, the use of split levels throughout gives the Viuffs four levels of living space, keeping all the family members (plus visiting neighbourhood children) constantly in touch. ▷





CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT In the children's spacious playroom, the customised teak cabinet lining the far wall stores books and puzzles. The oversized table and chairs are by Weylandts; XXXXXX stands in front of a pinboard, which displays her recent artworks; the white stools in the open-plan kitchen, which boasts a built-in bin for organic waste, are from Chair Crazy (021-465-9991); XXXXXX is an avid keyboard player. The artwork behind her is by Mads; the lagoon-side aspect of the house offers a quiet spot for contemplation.

'The kitchen-dining and outdoor pool-braai areas had to work as one,' says Charlotte, who confesses to finding the South African tendency to place the swimming pool just outside the lounge a little strange. 'With the kids constantly in and out of the kitchen in their swimsuits with wet feet, we wanted these tiled areas to be interleading – and the focal points of the house.' The synchronicity between the owners and their architect (and a shared love for swimming) played a central role in the realisation of their dream home. 'I could totally identify with the Viuffs wanting the pool to be central to the house,' says Graham Parker from Gapp, the house's architect. 'They loved my idea of creating the "walkway" to the front door over the pool.' Together they decided to make the roof structure 'float' to catch the sun and the views, letting it theme the home. 'The house is a tribute to the owners who are natural designers in their own right,' says Graham.

Inside is the undeniable influence of Danish minimalism, albeit in a warm and inviting way. 'We love the smell of wood,' says Mads. 'Veneers may be perfect, but they lack individuality. We wanted to use old-fashioned products in new ways.' It doesn't bother them that by using natural materials (Oregon-pine balustrades and teak floors) they have a space with the occasional flaw – such as the custom-designed slatted kitchen cupboards that have begun to warp a little. 'If you want perfection you have to go artificial,' muses Charlotte, whose pet hate is plastic. 'We didn't want to take the soul out.' And soul is something this home has plenty of – both in its design and in what the Viuffs bring to the space. □
Maxabella Luxury Homes, 084-500-0841, www.maxabella.co.za;
Gapp Architects and Urban Designers, 021-424-2390



THE VIUFFS' STYLE FILE

Mechanically sound. From the electronic pool covers ('they are child-proof, keep the water clean and lessen the need for chemicals') to the sound system and underfloor heating, this home is automated. South African and European plugpoints have been installed throughout – making the oft-travelling Viuffs' lives a little easier. Recessed lighting under the stairs and kitchen bar counter dims at the touch of a button.

Textural element. The interior wall treatments personalise the space. A very thin layer of plaster roughly covers the brickwork – this 'adds texture to a wall, keeping it alive and never boring'. Mads suggests finding a good bricklayer to achieve this effect.

Sliding doors. When closed, the wooden sliding doors between the bedrooms, bathrooms, kids' rooms and public spaces maintain privacy; when open, they enhance the sense of flow. Choose good-quality runners for smooth, hassle-free operation and to eliminate additional noise.



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THIS PICTURE The master bedroom, free of unnecessary clutter, is a haven of peace and tranquillity. The wall behind the bed conceals the couple's walk-in dressing room. All the bathroom elements – wall and floor tiles, corner bath, hand basins and roller blinds – were sourced by the couple from their contacts in the trade. They found the woven outdoor recliners in Java. RIGHT A view from the sitting room down to the makeshift home office and master bedroom beyond. Many of the home's elements – from granite countertops to window frames and interior wall cladding – were done by local tradespeople on site or in nearby Botrivier workshops.



CHARLOTTE'S HOME TRUTHS

We love living in Kleinmond because the girls' school, the library, the petrol station, the bank and the post office are all within five minutes of each other. Everybody knows you and there's never a queue (except in December).

When choosing your finishes, look at the overall scheme. Be careful not to choose elements that compete with each other.

I love raising our kids in South Africa because they have the chance to stay children for longer.

Nature is so important in a home. It allows the space to breathe and to live.

Our garden has only indigenous plants. We get to experience the birds, the insects – the whole cycle of things.

I have discovered that noise can be a problem in a big open house without wall-to-wall carpets!

I would never theme the rooms in my home. I'd get tired of them too quickly.

My eco tip would be to buy Enchantrix (011-482-4000, 021-709-0393) organic cleaning products, which come in economical five-litre containers.

We're wine drinkers more than collectors, even though we have a large wine rack. My favourite is Groot Constantia Blanc de Noir.